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Fantastic Four

WORLD WAR 3

PART 1 OF 4

DIRECT EDITION

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ROBINSON • WIERINGO • CASE

PREVIOUSLY IN Fantastic Four

As prophesied, Galactus arrived to consume the planet Earth! Even with the combined might of S.H.I.E.L.D. and the Avengers, the Fantastic Four seemed unable to stop him. However, one unexpected warrior tipped the scales — Dr. Doom! Doom prevented the apocalypse by repeatedly travelling to the ill-fated past until finding a way to aid the heroes to victory. Earth was ultimately saved, but Doom's jaunts tore at the fabric of time and space. Each trip widened the thin veil of reality between this existence and the next. Two neighboring universes spilled into each other and their histories became entangled. One battle may have been won, but the neverending war between heroes and villains reached a new plateau!...

THINGS CHANGE.

PEOPLE CHANGE.

LIFE ITSELF CAN CHANGE.

WITH A PHONE CALL OR A WORD OR TWIST OF FATE, WHAT ONCE WAS BECOMES NO MORE.

BE IT A LIFE OR A LOVE, A JOB, A JOKE, THE STATE OF WAR, AND PEACE BETWEEN NATIONS.

ANYTHING...EVERYTHING, BIG OR SMALL... IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE.

EVEN REALITY!

ON ONE WORLD... A WORLD OF REBORN CHAMPIONS, A MAN MAKES A CHOICE. HE DECIDES THAT UNREALITY WOULD BE BETTER FOR EARTH, THAN HAVING IT DEVOURED BY A GOD FROM THE STARS.

IN ANOTHER WORLD, HEROES BATTLE A MAN KNOWN AS DAMOCLES, AND IN A BLINK ALL THAT IS...

...BECOMES ALL THAT IS NOT.

ON BOTH WORLDS.

ALL THAT IS NOT.

THE SNOWS OF NOTHING SWEEP ACROSS. NOT COLD. NOT ICY STING.

A VOID.

YES...

...ANYTHING... EVERYTHING, BIG OR SMALL... IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE.

EVEN REALITY.

...OR EVEN A VOID.

"HERE THEY COME AGAIN, CITIZENS OF AMERICA...

"HERE, THEY COME.

"THE ENEMY.

"THE INVADING FOREIGN HORDE.

"ALREADY BATTLE STATIONS SOUND.

"ALREADY LOCAL DEFENSES LOAD AND SIGHT THEIR ARTILLERY, READY TO DELIVER A REPELLING BARRAGE.

"SWIFTLY THE INVADERS FLY THROUGH THE EXPLOSIVE SHELLS FIRED BY OUR GROUND FORCES.

"CLOSER THEY COME.

"CLOSER.

"Oh, WHO SHALL PROTECT THE CITY?

"WHO AMONG MANHATTAN'S BELEAGUERED IS STRONG ENOUGH TO PREVAIL?

"WHY, IT'S THE SAME THIS TIME AS IT'S ALWAYS BEEN... SINCE THIS DREADED WAR BEGAN...

"WHEN ALL ELSE FAILS...

"...AMERICA CAN RELY ON ITS SUPERHEROES.

"AND THIS TIME IT'S THE WILDC.A.T.S WHO ANSWER THE ALIEN CHALLENGE."

Stan Lee Presents

WORLD WAR 3

PART 1: LIFE IN WARTIME

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JAMES ROBINSON SCRIPT

MIKE WIERINGO PENCILS

RICHARD CASE INKS

WILDSTORM FX COLORS

RS&COMICRAFT'S DAVE LANPHEAR LETTERS

RUBEN DIAZ EDITOR

BOB HARRAS EDITOR IN CHIEF

"SOME OF THESE HEROES ARE THEMSELVES FROM OFF-WORLD...

"... AND EVEN THOSE AMONG THEM BORN OF EARTH SEEM ALIEN IN APPEARANCE...

"... YET EVERY OUNCE OF MIGHT THESE GLADIATORS HAVE IS GIVEN FREELY IN DEFENSE OF OUR ONCE GLITTERING NATION.

"THE ALIEN THREAT... A SCOOP-SQUADRON COMBINING BOTH DAEMONITES AND SKRULLS...

"... IS DOUBLE-MANNED THIS DAY.

"OUR HEROES FLAG. THOUGH VALIANT, EVEN THEY HAVE THEIR LIMITS. STILL, ASKING NO QUARTER THEY STRUGGLE ON, FALLING, ONE BY ONE."

"WILL THIS BE HOW IT ENDS FOR THIS GROUP? WILL THE ALIEN FORCES DESTROY ANOTHER OF OUR STERLING TEAMS?

"LIKE DV8?

"LIKE THE DEFENDERS WHOSE SUICIDE CHARGE LED BY UNION IS STILL REMEMBERED BY ALL?

"WILL THIS BE HOW IT ENDS FOR THE WILDC.A.T.S TOO?

"BUT THEN, REINFORCEMENTS!

"S.H.I.E.L.D.'S ELITE GROUP, THE BLACK KNIGHTS, LED BY SPECIAL AGENT DANE WHITMAN FOLLOWING GANTINI'S MURDER.

"KARNAK OF THE KNIGHTS, ONE OF THREE SURVIVING INHUMANS AFTER THE COWARDLY DESTRUCTION OF ATTILAN...

"... ACKNOWLEDGES HIS COUSIN GORGON FOR THE BRIEFEST OF MOMENTS BEFORE THEY BOTH FIGHT ANEW.

"THEY FIGHT.

"THEY FIGHT!

"FREE AMERICANS STRUGGLING TO PRESERVE THIS NATION AGAINST THE SEEMINGLY INSURMOUNTABLE ALIEN HORDE."

"BUT IT IS NOT JUST THEIR FIGHT.

"IT'S OUR STRUGGLE TOO. IT'S THE STRUGGLE OF EVERY AMERICAN WHO WOULD REMAIN SO...REMAIN FREE OF TYRANNY.

BE A PART OF THIS WAR...

"...AMERICA WANTS ITS BRAVEST...ITS FINEST... FOR ALL ARE NEEDED IN THIS, OUR BLACKEST HOUR.

"BE A PART OF AMERICA'S DEFENSE.

"ENLIST."

ENLIST!

ENLIST!

COOL.

HEY, BUD, WHATCHA DOING?

OH, HI. GOOD LIGHT.

WE NEED YOU

YEAH, GOOD LIGHT BACK ATCHA. YOU THINKING OF ENLISTING?

U.S. MAIL

A CHANCE TO DO SOMETHING. IT'S BETTER THAN DYING HERE... HAVING A BUILDING FALL ON YOU OR SOMETHING.

MAYBE I'LL JOIN UP WITH YOU. WE BEEN FRIENDS FOREVER. WE MIGHT AS WELL DO THIS TOGETHER TOO.

AND GOD KNOWS...

"... NEW YORK *AIN'T* WHAT IT *USED* TO BE."

THE BAXTER BUILDING LIES VACANT...

EMPTY.

THE FOUR WHOSE BASTION THIS SCARRED TOWER IS, HAVE BEEN GONE THESE PAST TWO MONTHS, LEAVING IT LONELY LIKE A CINEMA WHEN THE AUDIENCE HAS LEFT AND THE PROJECTOR IS TURNED OFF.

THOUGH NOW, THE PORTAL DEVICE WITHIN THIS INNER SANCTUM HUMS AGAIN WITH LIFE, SIGNALLING THEIR RETURN. A RETURN OF HEROES TO A LAND SORELY IN NEED OF SUCH.

TO THEM, THEIR TIME AWAY SEEMS NO MORE THAN A DAY.

THE RIDDLE OF TIME AND SPACE... TO THESE FOUR, AS EVERYDAY AS A FACTORY LUNCH BREAK.

THOUGH THE FOUR THEMSELVES ARE FAR FROM ORDINARY.

MANY HAVE CALLED THEM REMARKABLE, OTHERS CALL THEM UNIQUE.

BUT TO MOST THE TERM THAT BEST DESCRIBES THEM IS OBVIOUS...

... THEY'RE Fantastic!

QUICKLY, TEAM! WE HAVEN'T A SECOND TO LOSE!

I'LL CONTACT S.H.I.E.L.D. I *KNOW* NICK FURY WILL WANT TO HEAR WHAT WE'VE *UNCOVERED* IN THE *NEGATIVE ZONE.*

I'M *SAD* THAT EVEN WITH WHAT WE'VE UNCOVERED, THE MISSION WAS ANOTHER *FAILURE* IN TERMS OF FINDING POOR *BEN.*

YEAH, I GUESS HE'S STILL *TRAPPED* IN SOME FAR CORNER OF THE ZONE.

YOU'RE PROBABLY *RIGHT, BOBBY,* I'M *SORRY* TO SAY. BUT IF WHAT WE'VE UNCOVERED IS *WHAT* WE *THINK* IT IS, THEN I'M *SURE* BEN WILL FORGIVE US *DELAYING* OUR ON-GOING *HUNT* FOR HIM.

YOU THREE *BEGIN* THE PROCESS TO *CLOSE* THE NEGATIVE ZONE PORTAL.

YOU GOT IT, REED.

THE *LAST* THING WE NEED NOW IS FOR THE *TWO* WHO WERE *FOLLOWING* US TO GET OUT THROUGH --

TOO LATE, RICHARDS...

...TOO LATE TO DO ANY-THING—

...EXCEPT DIE!

ANNIHILUS AND DEFILE! THEY'VE FOUND US!

WE CAN'T HAVE YOU ALERTING YOUR WORLD... TO THE FACT THAT THERE ARE OTHER REALITIES.

WE'VE BEEN WAITING *LONG*... EVER ALERT... ON GUARD FOR *SUCH* AS YOU... TRAVELERS *WITHIN* THE ZONE WHO DISCOVER THE "*GREAT TRUTH*"!

OUR MISSION *THEN*... THEN AND NOW, IS A *SIMPLE* ONE!

KILL YOU!

KEEP WORKING ON THE *PORTAL*, SUE. *CLOSE* IT!

BUT *IF* IT CLOSES AND THESE *TWO* ARE STILL *HERE*, WE'LL *NEVER* GET RID OF THEM!

YOU WORRY ABOUT THE *OPENING*, SUE. *I'LL* WORRY ABOUT GETTING THEM *THROUGH* IT

YOU! TWO *SMALL* THINGS ARE *BARELY* WORTH THE EFFORT!

SMALL?

ONE PUNCH TO DEFEAT ME?

NO! THAT WILL NOT SUFFICE.

WE'RE A TEAM, UGLY. WE WORK AS ONE.

THE PUNCH WAS JUST THE GET UP...

...FOR THIS!

I CAN SENSE YOU, WOMAN. I CAN FEEL YOU, WHICH MEANS I CAN HURT YOU!

NO...

...NOT WHILE I'M ALIVE TO STOP YOU!

I INTEND TO *GET* YOU THROUGH THAT PORTAL, *MONSTER!*

EVEN IF IT MEANS I HAVE TO GO WITH --

REED!

NO!

GRAB HIM, JEREMY. PULL HIM --

WHOA

OH *HONEY*, I THOUGHT WE'D *LOST* YOU.

NO. IT'LL TAKE *MORE* THAN THEM TO BREAK UP TH S QUARTET!

SIR, WE HAVE A COMMUNICATION FROM REED RICHARDS.

I'M ALL EARS.

HELLO, REED. LONG TIME NO SEE... OR HEAR... OR KNOW IF YOU WERE ALIVE OR DEAD.

I GUESS IT HAS BEEN A WHILE. WHERE'S NICK FURY?

HE'S DEAD, REED. TWO WEEKS AGO.

HE WENT INTO EUROPE WITH URSA MAJOR AND SOME OTHE RUSSIAN REFUGEE HEROES.

IT WAS A COVERT MEETIN WITH RUSSIAN RESISTANCE. DOCTOR DOOM FORCES CAUGH THEM ALL.

YOU'RE SURE FURY'S DEAD?

DOOM HAD FURY'S HEAD MOUNTED ON HIS CASTLE RAMPARTS.

AND URSA MAJOR WAS EXECUTED WHILE IN HIS BEAR FORM, SO DOOM COULD HAVE HIS HIDE MADE INTO A RUG.

YEAH, I'M SURE... SURE THEY'RE BOTH DEAD.

WITH DUGAN KILLED LAST YEAR, I WAS THE NEXT LOGICAL REPLACEMENT

I'M SORRY.

SO AM I. I HAD A NOTION ABOUT SOME OF MY OLD TEAMMATES' CHILDREN.

I KNOW SOME ARE ALREADY IN SUPERTEAMS, BUT I THOUGHT I MIGHT BRING THEM ALL TOGETHER.

TRAIN THEM INTO THEIR OWN TEAM.

NOW, I GOT A WAR TO WIN, INSTEAD. OR AT LEAST NOT LOSE IT AS QUICKLY

THAT'S THE THING, LYNCH. I'VE JUST RETURNED FROM THE NEGATIVE ZONE.

YOU FIND BEN GRIMM?

NO.

PITY, I MISS TALKING WITH HIM ABOUT OUR DAYS TOGETHER IN TEAM 7.

WHAT I FOUND INSTEAD IS ARGUABLY OF MORE IMPORTANCE, LYNCH.

I FOUND A WAY WE CAN BEAT THEM! I FOUND A WAY WE CAN WIN!

WHAT DO YOU WANT ME TO DO?

ALERT THEM. ASSEMBLE THEM.

WHO?

"EVERYONE."

THE CALL GOES OUT, USING NATIVE AMERICAN CODES CREATED BY A S.H.I.E.L.D AGENT CODENAMED: RED WOLF.

THE AVENGERS

IT'S MARCH 13TH.
IT'S 7:00 PM EST.

STORMWATCH

IF WHAT FOLLOWS ON FROM THIS GOES AS WELL AS RICHARDS HOPES...IF AMERICA GETS TO WRITE THE HISTORY BOOKS, THEN THIS MOMENT WILL BE A NOTED ONE.

WHEN THE MESSAGE FIRST WENT OUT...

...AND EVERYBODY HEARD IT.

WETWORKS

WILD C.A.T.S
COVERT-ACTION-TEAMS

THE WORD HAS BEEN *SENT*, SIR.

TO EVERYONE, AGENT *KITAEN*?

YES, SIR.

WHAT ABOUT THE *THREE* LONE GUNS? THE THREE THAT GOT AWAY?

I'M *NOT* SURE I UNDERSTAND.

IRON MAN, MAJESTIC AND CAPTAIN AMERICA.

IRON MAN WAS *LAST* SEEN IN YUGOSLAVIA, SIR. WE'RE *TRYING* TO GET WORD TO HIM.

MAJESTIC IS *STILL* AN HONORARY AVENGER. HE'S *AGREED* TO FLY IN FROM *BRAZIL*.

AND CAP?

I *DID* CONTACT CAPTAIN AMERICA, SIR.

I DID IT WHEN I CONTACTED THE *AVENGERS*.

NO, *NOT* THAT ANDROID WHO'S STANDING IN FOR THE REAL McCOY.

WHEN I SAY, "*CAP*," I MEAN STEVE ROGERS. WHAT DOES HE CALL HIMSELF NOW...

"...NOMAD?"

HE'S *OUT* THERE *SOMEWHERE*, PRIS. IT'S UP TO *YOU* TO FIND HIM.

"WHO AMONG US CAN FORGET THE DAY WHEN WAR WAS DECLARED?

"WHO CAN FORGET THE PICTURES TRANSMITTED BACK FROM THE BATTLEFRONTS OF EUROPE...

"...OF BRAVE HUMANITY SLAIN SO RUTHLESSLY BY THE ALIEN HORDE?

"BUT FEW REMEMBER BEFORE THAT. LIFE BEFORE WARTIME.

"THE DAEMONITES HAD BEEN AMONG US FOR EONS, FIGHTING A SHADOW WAR WITH EARTH'S OTHER ALIEN VISITORS, THE KHERUBIM...

"THEN CAME THE FATEFUL DAY WHEN THE AVENGERS AND THE WILDC.A.T.S TEAMED UP...

"...AND THE DAEMONITE THREAT BECAME COMMON KNOWLEDGE.

"WITH EARTH'S HEROES UNITED THE DAEMONITES WERE SOON DRIVEN INTO HIDING.

"UNTIL THE SKRULLS INVADED AND SAW A KINDRED RACE IN THE DAEMONITES.

"SEEING THAT AMERICA WAS FULL OF HEROES WHO MIGHT UNDO THEIR FIRST PRIMITIVE BEACHHEADS, THEY TURNED THEIR ATTENTION TO EUROPE.

"THERE THEY FOUND A FURTHER ALLY IN ONE MAN. TRAITOR TO HIS RACE, JUDAS TO ALL...

"...DOCTOR DOOM.

"IT WAS HIS TECHNOLOGY, COUPLED WITH THE SKRULL'S OWN ALIEN SCIENCE, THAT LED TO THEIR CONQUER OF EUROPE AND ASIA IN A FEW BLOODY DAYS."

"...DAYS WHEN EARTH'S OWN STORMWATCH DEFENSIVE WAS REDUCED TO A FEW SURVIVING MEMBERS.

"SINCE THEN, AMERICA HAS BEEN A NATION UNDER CONSTANT SIEGE.

"AREAS NOT PROTECTED BY SUPERHUMANITY ARE GUARDED BY CITIZENS WHOSE LIVES ARE GEARED TO WAR AND PROTECTION OF THE LAND.

"SINCE THEN THE SIMPLE "HELLO," HAS BEEN REPLACED BY THE EVER FAMILIAR "GOOD LIGHT" AS MANUAL SCANNERS ARE EMPLOYED WITH EACH NEW MEETING TO DETECT SKRULL OR DAEMONITE IN COVERT GUISE.

"THE WORLD HAS CHANGED! FOR THE WORSE!

"THE ONLY THING THAT WILL CHANGE IT BACK ARE MEN AND WOMEN BRAVE ENOUGH TO FIGHT.

"REED RICHARDS' SCANNER-TEACH TECHNOLOGY ALLOWS ANY ENLISTED SOLDIER TO HAVE FULL COMBAT TRAINING AND BE READY FOR BATTLE IN DAYS.

"NO MORE BOOT-CAMP. NO MORE LONG, PAINFUL TRAINING.

"AMERICA DOESN'T HAVE THE TIME."

"IT NEEDS YOU. ONE AND ALL, IT NEEDS YOU!

"SO, ENLIST!

"ENLIST!

"ENLIST!"

EPILOGUE. AMERICAN UNITED FORCES RECRUITMENT OFFICE, NY, NY.

WE GOT TWO HERE, SARGE. THEY CAME IN TOGETHER OFF THE STREET.

GOOD LIGHT! YOU TWO LOOK JUST RIGHT.

WELCOME TO AMERICA'S UNITED FORCES, BOYS.

YOU GOT NAMES?

RICK JONES.

MY NAME'S P. EDMUND CHANG. MY FRIENDS CALL ME GRUNGE.

WE'RE READY TO FIGHT, SIR.

WE'RE READY FOR ANY-THING.

EPILOGUE TWO. THE NEGATIVE ZONE. A REALLY DENSE WHITE PART.

ONE MAN HAS DRIFTED THUS. FOR MINUTES OR MILLENNIA, HE CAN'T REMEMBER ANY MORE.

THEN... THROUGH THE WHITE HAZE THAT'S BEEN HIS MORNING AND EVENING AND EVERY HOUR BETWEEN FOR FAR TOO LONG...

... SOMETHING BECOMES VISIBLE.

A MAN. A MAN'S FORM. BUT LARGER.

WELL, HI-DE-HO. I DON'T BELIEVE IT.

IT'S BEEN SO LONG... ME, DRIFTING ALONE. TO FINALLY DRIFT INTO SOME-ONE.

ME, I BEEN DRIFTING FOR... YOU KNOW WHAT, I DON'T KNOW HOW LONG.

WELL, HOLD ON TO ME SO WE DON'T DRIFT APART AGAIN.

WHICH IS ALL WELL AND GOOD. NOW ALL WE GOTTA DO IS FIND A WAY OUT OF HERE.

MAYBE TOGETHER WE CAN --

SAY, WHAT'S YOUR SUIT MADE OF, BIG GUY? IT FEELS ALL ROCKY.

WORLD WAR 3 CONTINUES IN AVENGERS #13!